

**Wi-Fi 5.0 21st Century
Workforce Initiative:
*Implementation
Status Report***

**Addressed to:
Michigan Department of Labor &
Economic Growth**

Wi-Fi 5.0 Region:

Capital Area Michigan Works!

Career Alliance Michigan Works!

Saginaw-Midland-Bay Michigan Works!

Livingston County Michigan Works!

Thumb Area Michigan Works!

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Implementation Activities

Overview of Operations

Over the course of the past several months, the Workforce Initiative for Innovation (Wi-Fi 5.0) regional partnership among five Michigan Works! agencies (MWAs), representing Region 9 of the 21st Century Workforce Initiative, has made significant progress in setting and pursuing priorities related to the six strategic areas of the Initiative. To establish these priorities, the Leadership Team of Wi-Fi 5.0 reviewed the suggestions of the five work groups for the strategic areas (in this region, layoff aversion and rapid response are combined) in November 2006. The resulting top one to two priorities for each area were then communicated back to the work groups in January 2007 for the beginning of implementation. The Phase One Implementation priorities are as follows:

Table 1: Wi-Fi 5.0 Phase One Implementation Priorities

<i>Regional Workforce and Economy</i>
Develop regularly updated Regional Labor Market reports with data covering these areas: education; workforce and employment; labor and commute sheds; per capita incomes; demographics on select variables
Build capacity to use regional data strategically.
<i>Working With Employers</i>
Develop and implement a professional development process for business services staff.
<i>Layoff Aversion and Rapid Response</i>
Align dislocated worker training and placement efforts with the sectors identified by the Mid-Michigan WIRED Initiative, as appropriate.
<i>Developing, Attracting, and Retaining Talent</i>
Create a communications campaign directed at parents to inform them about postsecondary training and education, career pathways, and the changing economy.
Produce a DVD for middle and high school students on employability skills.
<i>Communications</i>
Research employer views of agencies and workforce to inform communications.
Package a One-Knock approach to customer service data collection, sharing, and utilization.

The membership of the work groups for this phase was modified somewhat to better reflect the demands of the priorities. For instance, within the Talent work group, two educational representatives replaced Michigan Works! staffpersons as representatives of the respective MWAs' regions. These work groups proceeded to meet every-other week to plan implementation their priorities and execute these plans. What follows is an update on the work that has occurred within each of these areas by Wi-Fi 5.0.

Throughout these efforts, a Public Policy Associates, Incorporated (PPA) team has assisted Wi-Fi 5.0 with group facilitation, strategic planning, and implementation.

Strategic Area Progress

Regional Workforce and Economy

Charged with designing a regionally relevant data sharing tool, the work of this group was well-established even in the fall of 2006. Nonetheless, the group continued to work intently on refining the content of the data tool. Specifically, led by Doug Drake of PPA, the group created a set of updatable spreadsheets that address these areas:

- Top 10 and Bottom 10 Industries
- Commuting Patterns
- Educational Attainment
- Educational Performance
- Employment History Changes
- Location Quotient Information
- Population
- Occupation

By examining these areas, the Wi-Fi 5.0 partners can make better strategic decisions about workforce and economic development activities.

The data is organized by county (and includes Flint proper when possible). The content stems from Labor Market Information and the Census Bureau. The tool is designed to be revised quarterly by a single entity, with the intention that the entire set of data will be shared electronically across the region.

The group is also working on an annual workshop-style conference that would be held by the Region 9 MWAs and will discuss the current state of Michigan's economy as it relates to local employment. This would accomplish the group's second Phase One priority, and build capacity to use regional data strategically. The group has begun to compile a database of expert contacts that can be used to invite presenters and attendees.

Working With Employers

The initial work of this group is all but done. Its priority was to develop and implement a professional development process for business services staff, and only three months after this task was assigned, the first Professional Development Session for Wi-Fi 5.0 agencies took place. Occurring on March 26, 2007, this meeting gave participants a chance to understand commonalities and differences among their agencies in how they approach employers and which industries they target.

Each meeting is centered around an "Industry Presentation." The first session's industry expert presenter was Stephen Rapundalo, executive director of MichBio, statewide trade association of the life sciences industry. This presentation, and the session in general, aimed to familiarize the

participants with up-and-coming industries in the state, linking the Wi-Fi 5.0 initiative with WIRED and looking ahead at Michigan's future economy.

Other topics for professional development sessions include:

- Industry-Specific Information at each session to be presented by industry experts
- Customer Service
- Business Enhancement Solutions and Training
- Networking
- Syncing MWA Partners
- Administrative and Technical Skills

Layoff Aversion and Rapid Response

This work group was charged to “align dislocated worker training and placement efforts with the sectors identified by the Mid-Michigan WIRED Initiative, as appropriate.” Since MMIT has yet to identify the aforementioned sectors, this group has not been able to complete their task. They have, however, focused on WIRED's current efforts as well as the efforts of Automation Alley and the Regional Skills Alliances in building jobs for the future.

Based on discussions of these organizations and their initiatives, the group feels that Michigan Works! needs to improve the following areas in order to provide education and training for Michigan's future economy:

- Outreach to middle and high schools and education of the next generation of workers
- Services for management and white-collar job-seekers
- Agency-wide familiarization with emerging industries
- Retraining of dislocated workers so their skills will better match the ones in demand

Developing, Attracting, and Retaining Talent

The work of this group has been profoundly affected by the Central Area Michigan Works! (CAMW) “Keep Learning” campaign, at least in regards to one of its first priorities: “Create a communications campaign directed at parents to inform them about postsecondary training and education, career pathways, and the changing economy.” CAMW's campaign is currently targeted at businesses and the general community. It does not plan to target parents until the second phase of its campaign—most likely in the fall of 2007. Therefore, the Talent group for Wi-Fi 5.0 intends to adopt the CAMW template, and fill in this gap for the region. Specifics about advertising mediums have yet to be determined, as does a budget for expenses.

This group was also charged with the development of a DVD for middle school and high school students on the topic of employability skills. The group has made significant strides in defining the DVD content, format, and distribution. The key components of the instructional film include the four segments:

- Segment One: Workplace Etiquette
- Segment Two: Team Work

- Segment Three: Honesty
- Segment Four: Problem Solving

In addition, a user's guide would accompany the DVD to give teachers and school counselors more information on the purpose of and need for the DVD, ideas for classroom discussion and activities for each segment, and Web site links for further information. Overall, the guide will help classroom administrators maximize the DVD's potential impact. The group plans to go through the region's Educational Advisory Groups (EAGs) to facilitate distribution to local schools.

Production of the DVD is on hold as the group waits for a budgetary allowance and then finds an organization that will be able to produce the video.

Communications

Making much of their limited time together, this group is drafting an employer survey that will be administered by telephone to users and non-users of Michigan Works! The purpose of this survey is to fulfill the group's first priority: to research employer views of the MWAs and workforce to better inform communications.

The questions of this survey can be separated into five different concepts:

- *Recognition.* Degree to which the MW brand, the local agency name, purpose, and array of services are recognized.
- *Utilization.* Types of assistance sought and received.
- *Satisfaction.* Whether employers who have used MWA services in the past two years, would use them again. Satisfaction with previous services.
- *Employer characteristics.* Type of employers responding to the survey compared with the type of employers the system serves. Workforce development issues.
- *Perceptions of MWA.* Perceived characteristics of MWA. Whether MWA collaboration is important. Preferred mode of communication from MWA.

The Michigan Works! Association and three other 21st Century Workforce regions have agreed to join forces with the Wi-Fi 5.0 research to leverage funding and create statewide data. This agreement has slowed the scheduling for fielding the survey.

The group's second Phase One priority was to package a One-Knock approach to customer service data collection, sharing, and utilization. However, this work is very dependent on the Working With Employers work group, and since that work group is currently very busy with their own priorities, the Communications group has decided to postpone collaboration.

Benefits of Agency Collaboration

As a result of agency members participating in the work groups or on the Leadership Team, the agencies are experiencing greater interaction as pertains to their workforce activities. This

added-value of the Initiative has led to greater communication among the agencies about job openings, layoffs, job fairs, and information about training programs. The listing below highlights some of the exchanges the agencies experienced during the Initiative:

- Two people were sent for ethanol training from the Thumb Area.
- “Job of the Day” announcements on Channel 25 reach the Thumb Area and that of Career Alliance.
- Hard-to-fill jobs are being advertised by the SMBMW in TAMW’s area.
- Career Alliance was notified by LCMW of upcoming layoffs affecting some Flint area residents.

The agencies are excited to have this additional communication occurring. This regional collaboration among the agencies is seen as enhancing their ability to address workforce needs in this time of economic trouble for the state.

Regional Partnerships

Each of the five Wi-Fi 5.0 MWAs brings extensive partnerships in the economic development and educational arenas, such as local chambers of commerce, community colleges, and intermediate school districts. These connections have proven important as the work groups implement the Phase One priorities. While these preexisting partnerships are of great importance and will be maintained in the future, the key new partnership that arises directly from the 21st Century Workforce planning process is between Wi-Fi 5.0 and the Mid-Michigan Innovation Team.

Connecting With WIRED

Because the Wi-Fi 5.0 region is coterminous with the Mid-Michigan Innovation Team WIRED region, the emerging relationship between the two is the principle regional-level partnership. Thumb Area Michigan Works! and Capital Area Michigan Works! directors, Marv Pichla and Doug Stites, are members of the MMIT board, and have been working to facilitate communication between the two groups with the assistance of Jeffrey Padden of PPA. Dr. Pichla also chairs the MMIT Communications Committee, which creates important opportunities to align the messages of the groups. MMIT staff was involved from the outset in Wi-Fi 5.0's efforts, and have held membership on two of its work groups. Select MMIT staff are also provided with minutes from all of the work groups. Overall, the regional partnership between Wi-Fi 5.0 and MMIT represents connections with the following organizations:

- Center for Automotive Research
- Corporation for a Skilled Workforce
- C.S. Mott Foundation (MMIT Board Ex Officio Member Jack Litzenberg, Senior Program Officer)
- Economic Development Council of Livingston County (MMIT Board, Fred Dillingham, Executive Director) and other economic development agencies within the region
- Genesee Chamber of Commerce (MMIT Board, Ed Donovan, Senior Vice President of Economic Development; MMIT Board Official Guest Greg Nicholas) and chambers within the region
- Greater Flint Healthcare Coalition
- Ingham Intermediate School District (MMIT Board, Stan Kogut, Superintendent) and other regional educational service agencies
- Kettering University
- Lansing Community College
- Michigan Association of Counties
- Michigan Building and Trades Council (MMIT Board, Patrick "Shorty" Gleason, Vice President)
- Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth (MMIT Board Official Guest Brenda Njiwaji, Director, Bureau of Workforce Programs)
- Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center

- Michigan Regional Skills Alliances
- Michigan State University (MMIT Board, Paul Hunt, Associate Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies)
- Michigan Works! Agencies
- Midland Tomorrow (MMIT Board, Scott Walker, Executive Director)
- Mott Community College (MMIT Board, Tom Crampton, Executive Dean, Regional Technology Initiative)
- Saginaw Valley State University (MMIT Board, George Puia, Dow Chemical Company Centennial Chair in Global Business)
- U.S. Department of Labor/Employment Training Administration
- W. K. Kellogg Foundation
- West Michigan Strategic Alliance

Described by MMIT board and staff leaders as the “workforce arm of MMIT,” Wi-Fi 5.0 serves a valuable role in linking the federal and state initiatives. As such, the broad partnering represented within the umbrella of MMIT, allows for access by Wi-Fi 5.0 to a vast array of current and potential regional partners. Presently, the two groups continue to define alignment of specific elements of their work, especially in the areas of education, resources mapping, and communications. PPA staff attend all MMIT board meetings and have met with MMIT staff to forge closer working relationships.

Next Steps for Wi-Fi 5.0

The coming months will prove critical for Wi-Fi 5.0 activity. Each work group is poised to launch efforts directly related to their strategic-area priorities. In the case of the Working With Employers group, the first of the business services professional development sessions had been organized and occurred on March 26, 2007. The following portion of the report provides information about the direction Wi-Fi 5.0 plans.

Wi-Fi 5.0 Leadership

The Leadership Team of Wi-Fi 5.0 manages the overall direction of the group's work. In addition, the directors of the five MWAs involved determine funding for the products coming out of the work groups. In the next five months, the Leadership Team will meet twice more to monitor and discuss the progress being made on each strategic area. The team will also determine what the next set of priorities will be and what these will entail in terms of individual agency commitment, collaboration with MMIT and other partners in the region, and the sources of funding.

Wi-Fi 5.0 Work Groups

The five work groups pushing ahead in the strategic areas will continue to vary in intensity of effort and timeline for completion of Phase One priorities. Over the spring and summer, the primary goals of each area will be implemented, with one-time products or ongoing operations resulting. As it stands currently, the work groups plan to meet approximately three more times during this period with the guidance of their PPA facilitators. After this, the groups will reassess their budgets and outcomes.

Further Activity

Based on earlier discussions and recommendations from the strategic area work groups, a number of worthy pursuits remain to be implemented. The Leadership Team, as noted above, is responsible for deciding when, and if, these will become Wi-Fi 5.0 priorities. In the fall of 2006, the items being considered included those listed in the table below.

Table 2: Remaining Activities for Wi-Fi 5.0

<i>Regional Workforce and Economy</i>
Produce a Resources Map of current resources across the agencies and determine gaps.
<i>Working With Employers</i>
Create a joint employer tracking database.
Create a coordinated business services operation across all agencies.
Improve the Michigan Talent Bank.
Forge final agreement on terminology regarding employers as essential customers.
Align partners with coordinated business services operation.
<i>Layoff Aversion and Rapid Response</i>
Develop an online Employer Resource Center in collaboration with regional partners.
Hold a regional conference to share best practices regarding layoff aversion.
Institute a 48-hour window for a joint strategic meeting between the State, company representatives, and the local MWA in response to warn notices and other similar alerts.
Design a database that is consistent across the agencies to capture rapid response information and to easily report to the State.
Gather dislocated worker contact information from companies and conduct follow-mailing about MWA services.
Use existing dislocated worker funds to subsidize health insurance premiums to aid dislocated workers who are job searching or getting training.
<i>Developing, Attracting, and Retaining Talent</i>
Develop a work readiness certification system regionally.
Develop an incumbent worker education resources cooperative to bring employers and training providers together in a streamlined process.
Assess current high school and college student workplace programs and address gaps based on best practices.
Investigate alignment of current accelerated training and occupational demand and resolve gaps.
Research data on these areas to inform marketing: existence of recreational facilities and gathering places, existence of cultural assets, and crime data and trends.
<i>Communications</i>
Establish regional branding.
Create Employer Resource Tools.
Develop and distribute quarterly “State of the Workforce” e-mail blasts from agencies to employers.
Create a continual employer input/feedback vehicle, drawing on WIRED connections.
Implement mass media branding tactics.

The extent to which these can be addressed is unknown at this point, given the demand they will exert on partners and MWA staff, in addition to the funding required to fulfill them.

Needs Going Forward

Given the ambitious and worthwhile goals of Wi-Fi 5.0 for its 13-county region, the group is seeking assistance from the Department of Labor & Economic Growth (DLEG) at this stage. The group has conducted a thorough planning period, and has allotted some funds from its original grant to priority products, but it has become apparent that the planning funds simply cannot be stretched as far as needed, even with the assistance of partners. It seems that in addition to being much larger geographically than the other 21st Century Workforce Initiative regions, Wi-Fi 5.0 has also generally moved more quickly in establishing its priorities—no small feat with five MWAs collaborating together as never before. Therefore, the group views DLEG as essential to the ongoing success of its Initiative efforts.

Technical Assistance

Wi-Fi 5.0 is interested in the technical assistance promised for the regions under the Initiative. The table below is organized to show the strategic area activity along with the technical assistance need in that area.

Table 3: Technical Assistance Needs for Wi-Fi 5.0 Activities	
Priority by Strategic Area	Technical Assistance Desired
<i>Regional Workforce and Economy</i>	
Quarterly updates of the regional data spreadsheets.	The Labor Market Information office within DLEG might provide these updates.
Develop regional capacity for strategic data use.	The group is seeking assistance in this area; some of the MWAs within the region have access to data experts, others do not. DLEG might be able to arrange targeted training in this area.
<i>Layoff Aversion and Rapid Response</i>	
Create a systematic way for gaining local and regional data on companies in distress and putting this information to strategic use.	Wi-Fi 5.0 is anxious to access data from the contracted TA providers, such as the University of Michigan and Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center. The group would appreciate the arrangement of meetings with each contractor by DLEG to begin gathering useful information for dissemination across the region.

Table 3: Technical Assistance Needs for Wi-Fi 5.0 Activities

Priority by Strategic Area	Technical Assistance Desired
Hold a regional conference to share best practices regarding layoff aversion.	The group believes that in connection with its own MWAs and MMIT, DLEG has a key role in promoting best practices within the region. For this activity, DLEG's assistance in funding, coordination, content, and guest speaker recruitment would all be useful.
Design a database that is consistent across the agencies to capture rapid response information and to easily report to the State.	The group understands that the State, in response to U.S. Department of Labor, is going to be requesting information of the MWAs through an online database about employer contact. Wi-Fi 5.0 sees creation of a regional database as potentially productive, but more information is needed as to its content and how to balance local confidences with regional and state-level interests.

Implementation Funding Gaps

As noted above, there are some funding gaps that Wi-Fi 5.0 needs assistance in addressing. According to the Initiative Fact Sheet distributed at the July 2006 Town Hall Meeting, the 21st Century Workforce Initiative funding of \$50,000 per MWA (and ten-percent bonus) was provided to “build regional partnerships” and to “develop plans.” As Wi-Fi 5.0 proceeds with implementation of strategic area activities, costs are inevitable and range from small amounts aligned with regular MWA operations, to much broader expenses. The table below provides a listing of unfunded Phase One activities and explanations of the immediate funding gaps.

Table 4: Wi-Fi 5.0 Implementation Funding Gaps

Priority by Strategic Area	Funding Needs
<i>Regional Workforce and Economy</i>	
Develop regularly updated Regional Labor Market reports with data covering these areas: education; workforce and employment; labor and commute sheds; per capita incomes; and demographics on select variables.	If the LMI office is not able to assist Wi-Fi 5.0 with quarterly updates to this tool, the cost of contracting this work out is estimated at \$15,000 annually.
<i>Developing, Attracting, and Retaining Talent</i>	
Production of a DVD for teens on employability skills to be distributed through the region's middle schools and high schools.	The cost of creating this DVD privately was estimated at over \$30,000. While the group is also prepared to seek arrangements with a college within the region, the production costs are still likely to range between \$10,000 and \$15,000.

Table 4: Wi-Fi 5.0 Implementation Funding Gaps

Priority by Strategic Area	Funding Needs
Create a communications campaign directed at parents to inform them about postsecondary training and education, career pathways, and the changing economy.	One of the MWA partners in Wi-Fi 5.0 (Capital Area Michigan Works!) has developed a parent campaign plan for its own three counties, so the group plans to leverage this work toward a regional effort. However, basic production of material and placement costs will mount across the region. The group considers this an essential piece of its strategic plan, and seeks \$50,000 from DLEG to replicate the campaign throughout the region. This figure assumes extensive in-kind support from media and contributions by the MWAs.
<i>Communications</i>	
Research employer views of agencies and workforce to inform communications.	PPA is conducting the research (a telephone survey and focus groups) on behalf of Wi-Fi 5.0 to better understand employer views within the region. From the original 21 st Century Workforce grant, \$25,000 has been allocated to this activity. However, an additional \$25,000 is needed to undertake and complete the study, analyze the results, and distribute the findings among the partners.

The Wi-Fi 5.0 Leadership Team has given careful consideration to these requests. The regional group of MWAs remains committed to the principles of the 21st Century Workforce Initiative and fully intends through its ongoing actions to improve its region through innovation and effective products and processes.